

Altoona Area High School, Annex
6th Avenue and 14th Street
Fourth Ward Neighborhood
Altoona
Blair County
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-5851-A

HABS

PA

7-ALTO

41-A

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
ALTOONA AREA HIGH SCHOOL, ANNEX

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Location: 6th Avenue & 14th Street

Date of Erection: 1927-29

Architects: Frederic J. Shollar and Frank A. Hersh

Description: With three stories over the basement, this annex adjoined the rear of the original brownstone section of the high school and was deliberately plain in design. Completely engulfing the old auditorium, the annex extended to 14th Street and contained an open light court so that rooms on both sides of each corridor would have access to natural light.

The superstructure is steel reinforced with concrete and the facade is red brick with Indiana limestone trim. The south facade currently adjoins a square brick and glass entranceway, which replaced the brownstone building in 1973. There are two entrances each on the east and west facades and all have limestone surrounds with molded arches over the doors. These entrances, which also contain the stairwells, extend beyond the rest of the facade toward the avenues; molded panels contain the Pennsylvania state seal and a row of tiles. The entrance on the north facade was originally more elaborate than the others, but has been mostly obscured by a walkway over 14th Avenue connecting to a more recent annex.

Original fenestration on the north, east, and west sides was regular, but many windows were bricked in during the 1970 renovation, leaving no pattern to the remainder.

The interior was described in the 1929 yearbook by an appreciative member of the first class to use the new facilities. According to that article, the corridor walls had glazed buff brick on the lower five feet and smooth plaster above that to the ceiling. Corridor floors were linoleum and terrazzo while classroom floors were white maple.

The new building contained fifty classrooms plus specialty areas on each floor. The basement contained the gymnasium and the vocational department, which consisted of an automobile shop, an electrical shop, a sheet-metal shop, a machine shop, and rooms for mechanical drawing. School offices, the study hall, the girls' gymnasium, two medical rooms, and the 1,350-seat auditorium were on the first floor. The second floor contained the library. The cafeteria, music rooms, and the household arts department containing cooking, sewing, and demonstration rooms were on the third floor.

History: In 1926, school board officials approved preliminary plans for enlargement of the high school building. The entire block between 5th and 6th avenues and 14th and 15th streets were cleared, including the dwelling of superintendent of schools Laramy at 1403 6th Ave. and the former Clement Jaggard home. To accommodate students meeting in the Jaggard building, two-session days were instituted.

A call for bids resulted in the submission of ten, with the local architectural firm of Hersh and Shollar being selected to design the expanded facilities. The resulting contract required the successful bidder to provide a consultant architect. Hersh and Shollar selected Frank Irving Cooper of Boston, one of the leading school architects in the country, to fulfill that stipulation. Cooper was on notice that he would be called upon to come to Altoona to consult, inspect, and advise on the work in progress. Dr. Jesse B. Davis, a member of Cooper's Boston staff and an authority on school-room arrangement, would be called upon to make recommendations regarding space allocation.

Begun July 1, 1927, twenty-nine of the classrooms were ready for classes in September 1928. The annex was completed February 1, 1929.

ALTOONA AREA HIGH SCHOOL ,
ANNEX
HABS No. PA-5851-A (page 2)

Sources: Maps: 1882, 1888, 1894, 1909, 1932, 1951. City directories. Tax assessment records. Deed books: E/446, 149/429, 1122/941. Altoona Mirror files on education and public schools. The Horseshoe, Altoona High School yearbook, 1929.

Project Information: This report was part of a larger project to document the city of Altoona, Pennsylvania. The project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record (HABS/HAER), Robert Kapsch, chief, at the request of America's Industrial Heritage Project (AIHP), Randy Cooley, director. Overviews of the history of the city (HABS No. PA-5784) and the fourth ward neighborhood (HABS No. PA-5786) provide context for these buildings as well as a comprehensive list of sources. See also additional HABS reports on buildings in the city and other neighborhoods.

This report was prepared by Nancy Spiegel in the summer of 1989 under the supervision of HABS senior historian Alison K. Hoagland and Kim E. Wallace, supervisory historian. Spiegel's and other project historians' work was published as Railroad City: Four Historic Neighborhoods in Altoona, Pennsylvania (Washington, D.C.: HABS/HAER, National Park Service, 1990), edited by Kim E. Wallace, supervisory historian, and Sara Amy Leach, HABS historian.